

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Minerals Management Service  
Office of Communications**

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***NEWS RELEASE***

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**FOR** March 17, 1997  
**RELEASE:**

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**MMS Recognizes Industry Efforts for Safe Offshore Operations**

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today recognized three offshore operators with the agency's 1996 Safety Award for Excellence (SAFE), marking the first time the prestigious award was given in three categories.

[Kerr-McGee Corporation](#), Oklahoma City, OK was given the SAFE Award in the "Major or Large Operator" category for the exemplary way in which they conducted operations in the Ship Shoal area of the Gulf of Mexico.

In the "Independent or Small Operator" category, [Mesa Limited Partnership](#) of Irving, TX was singled out for the faultless manner in which they operated in the South Pelton Block 13 Field in the Gulf of Mexico.

[Noble Drilling Company](#) of Houston, TX was recognized in the "Contractor" category for the commendable manner in which drilling operations were conducted by the Tom Jobe Drilling Rig and crew in the Gulf of Mexico.

"It is a pleasure to recognize the special achievements of these companies with the national SAFE award," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman. "In each instance, their employees were well trained and demonstrated a very positive attitude and strong commitment regarding safe operations, records were complete and accurate, and maintenance and housekeeping were exemplary. "

The awards were presented by Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Minerals Management, Bob Armstrong and Quarterman during the annual meeting of the National Ocean Industries Association in Washington, DC.

Quarterman noted that MMS revised the guidelines for the SAFE Award to allow an annual award for each category, large, small or independent, and contractor, if the proper criteria are met. "Even though operations in all three categories have received awards previously, there was a tendency to favor large operators in the past," said Quarterman. "Now that we have three categories, each will have a better chance to be recognized for their excellence in conducting a safe and environmentally clean offshore operation."

MMS is the federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf, and collects, accounts for, and disburses about \$4 billion yearly in revenues from offshore federal mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

Editor's Note: Copies of the citation awarded each company may be viewed on the MMS Internet website at: <http://www.mms.gov>

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